

Annual Report 2001 of the Environmental Finance Center Network

Environmental Finance Center Network

2001 Annual Report

EFC at the University of Southern Maine

The EFC at the University of Southern Maine in Region 1 is focused on land protection and smart growth

With the help of the Muskie School at the University of Southern Maine (USM), EPA Region I HQ, and EPA/HQ in Washington, it has been an auspicious beginning for the New England Environmental Finance Center (NE/EFC). We now have in place the beginnings of our organization, in offices we share with the graduate program in Community Planning & Development and the Casco Bay National Estuary Project. After highly competitive and successful searches, we now have a projects director, a graduate assistant, a part-time administrative assistant; and a talented, helpful, and growing group of collaborators in the region's public, private, and non-profit sectors. The NE/EFC has let a contract to conduct a pilot GIS inventory of conservation lands in New England, and initiated a series of roundtable meetings on

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land protection and smart growth throughout the New England states, which will serve as the primary source of information to guide our future activities and priorities with Region

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Because our organization (NE/EFC) has just been launched, the best way to summarize our activities is by a short chronology. In 2001

there were no reportable events prior to August.

Aug. With Maine Congressmen Tom Allen (1st District) and John Baldacci (2nd District), assisted in the organization and delivery of a conference at the University of Southern Maine on "smart growth." The conference was attended by some 300 state and local officials and interested citizens from throughout northern New England, and featured Congressman Earl Blumenauer (D-Oregon) who discussed Portland, Oregon's successes and failures.



Sept. Acquired the services of graduate assistant Carry Oostveen, a Ph.D. candidate in Community Planning and Development at USM's Muskie School. Ms. Oostveen has assisted in the recruitment of the projects director, securing a contractor for the Pilot GIS Inventory, initial development of the NE/EFC website, and with the annual meeting of the national EFC Network in North Carolina.

Participated in the design and delivery (with the Maine State Planning Office) of the Maine Smart Growth Institute for state and local officials, private developers, and non-profits involved in development matters. The Institute consisted of two week-long training sessions (the second session was in December 2000), and involved over 15 faculty and 35 students that participated in both sessions. The Institute was in part designed as a possible prototype for a New England Smart Growth Institute.

Participated in a training workshop on "systems thinking and sustainability" presented by the Sustainability Institute of White River Junction, Vermont, founded by Donella Meadows.

Oct. Attended annual meeting of the national EFC Network at the University of North Carolina, together with representatives from the nine EFCs and EPA/HQ in Washington, D.C.

Met with David Keeley and Kathleen Morrison of the Maine State Planning Office (SPO) to discuss potential collaborations with the Maine and New England coastal zone programs, and the international Gulf of Maine Council.

Met with Marcel Polak of the Appalachian Mountain Club, Frank Miles of the American Farmland Trust, and Megan Shore of the Maine Land Trust Network to discuss mutual interests and potential collaborations with the NE/EFC.

Met with Evan Richert, director of the Maine SPO, to discuss development of the Maine Smart Growth Institute. The Institute would serve as a possible foundation for a region-wide, New England Smart Growth Institute for state and local officials, private developers, and non-profits involved in development matters.

After advertising in newspapers throughout New England, and with the assistance of EPA/New England, interviewed a very strong pool of finalists for the projects director position.

Nov. Hired Sam Merrill as projects director. Sam brings to the Finance Center a background in research, land management, and land protection. After some orientation, Sam commenced planning for the series of six roundtable meetings on limited development and smart growth, one in each New England state, to be held through the winter and spring. After interviews, also hired Alison Barker as part-time administrative assistant..

Met with Maine Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) Commissioner Martha Kirkpatrick to discuss the possible development of a region-wide, New England Smart Production Institute for private businesses interested in making their operations at once "greener" and more profitable. Arrangements made to address the New

England Governors Conference and environmental commissioners/secretaries at their winter meeting, on the activities of the New England Environmental Finance Center and the capabilities of the Environmental Finance Center Network.

At the invitation of EPA's Environmental Finance Advisory Board (EFAB), participated in a national seminar at EPA Headquarters on "Environmental Management Systems (EMS) and Financial Performance."

Met with Bill Johnson of the Maine Department of Health Services (DHS), Mark Sceery of EPA/New England, and David Breau of the Maine DEP to discuss finance and management issues with Maine's 2200 public and private water systems; and agreed to be of assistance in the design and analysis of a self-assessment of systems of needs. Contacted the University of Maryland EFC to explore making use of their existing materials in this connection.

Dec. After directing a letter of solicitation to fourteen qualified vendors across New England and extensive reviews of the five qualified proposals in response (with the assistance of EPA/New England), selected Applied Geographics, Inc., of Boston to conduct the Pilot GIS Inventory of all lands in New England under some form of conservation protection.

Initiated weekly staff meetings for the NE/EFC staff and collaborators.

Participated in the design and delivery (with the Maine SPO) of the second half of the Maine Smart Growth Institute.

Met with the twelve-member senior management team of the Maine DEP to familiarize them with the mission, structure, and regional aspirations of the NE/EFC.

Met with Rachel Pohl of the Cox Family Trust of Boston to discuss inter alia possible funding for a region-wide New England Smart Growth Institute. (Strong interest was evidenced; follow-up will be forthcoming.)

Met in Boston with EPA/New England senior staff to discuss land conservation issues, capacities, and contacts throughout New England, and the development of the NE/EFC; delivered proposed revisions to the "timeline and deliverables" of the Cooperative Agreement, which were subsequently agreed to.

Met with senior management of Applied Geographics in their offices, to finalize contract terms and to set a schedule for delivery of products.

NEW NE/EFC PROJECTS

Roundtable discussions on land protection and smart growth

A series of facilitated 1-day conferences, one in each New England state, is underway. These conferences are collecting case study information from people with smart growth experience in financing limited development projects throughout New England. Each meeting consists of 15 – 20 key people in the state, about 7 of whom give short presentations on a particular project. Structured discussion is also helping identify specific areas of greatest need for

assistance in financing limited development projects. Information collected so far will be invaluable in 1) making lessons learned available to those attempting to finance limited development projects throughout New England, and 2) helping the NE/EFC develop future work plans based on areas of significant need.

GIS Feasibility Study

Information regarding the location and type of conserved lands is key to numerous land use and environmental decisions by federal, state, and local agencies, as well as by private individuals, organizations, and developers.

As part of its mission, the NE/EFC at the Muskie School is committed to "assess the feasibility of developing a GIS-based inventory of conservation lands in New England." This task is assessing whether a single database of conserved land in New England is feasible and desirable. It would begin with an assessment of available data and the development of a long-term plan to create the regional database and to make it available on-line to potential users, public and private. If this initial study demonstrates feasibility, a grant application will be assembled to secure funding from a variety of federal and private sources for the full-scale project, with demonstration of its potential uses and applications.

The conserved-lands-database would include data on location, ownership, purposes, restrictions, etc. Records would be geo-referenced for use in common GIS systems, such as Arc View. Maps of the data could be accessible over the World Wide Web using ESRI Internet Map Server or similar software.

A GIS firm in Boston has been contracted to conduct the study (Applied Geographics, Inc.; www.appgeo.com/homepage/default.htm). The study will be completed in April, 2002.

About the Environmental Finance Center Network

The Environmental Finance Center at the University of Southern Maine is one of a group of university-based centers that concentrate on problems in the financing of environmental services. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency established the centers in order to bring the work of universities directly to bear on local environmental problems. For more information on the Environmental Finance Center network, see www.epa.gov/efinpage.

For more information about the NE/EFC, see <http://efc.muskie.usm.maine.edu>, or call Prof. Richard Barringer, Director, at 207-780-4418, or Sam Merrill, Projects Director, at 207-228-8596.